

sixteenth century Italian comedians began to play at Paris in Italian, The Italian actresses undressed on the stage much and often, so that "Italian comedy" came to mean vulgar and licentious comedy. The Parliament of Paris held that the plays were immoral. Many of them are said to have been obscene.¹

Madame de Maintenon having heard that they were immoral, they were forbidden in 1677.² The Italian comedy struggled

on, however. For a long time no women visited it, but in the eighteenth century a comedy called *Arlequin, Empereur dans la Lune* became celebrated. It was a satire on the France of the time. Women ignored the grossness for the sake of the satire.³

The plays of the Italians were all either farces for pure fun or satires on the mores of the time. "Many were satires on women."

In one of these last, the saying was ascribed to Aristotle, upon seeing a tree from the limbs of which four women were hanging, "How happy men would be, If all trees bore that fruit"

Women were currently represented as empty-headed, vain, fond of pleasure, frivolous, and fickle. Lawyers were also a favorite object of satire.⁴ In the Italian theater *ecriteaux* were hung up, on which the speeches were written and the audience joined in singing the couplets.⁶

668. "Commedia del arte" in Italy. In Italy the *commedia del arte* went through many vicissitudes. At Venice, late in the eighteenth century, Gozzi undertook to revive it by composing what he called "fables." They were fairy extravaganzas, based on Mother Goose stories or fairy tales. They were in part improvised, but in part written, either in prose or verse, in order to make sure of the essential points of the action. The older

custom had been to prepare only a *scenario*, in which the story was told in brief outline, with the allotment of parts in the production.⁶ Pantaleone, in the *commedia del arte*, is sad, — an imbecile, dissolute old man. Gozzi gave him *brio* and *bonarieta*, with cordiality and humor. Goldoni, who got into a war with

¹ Bernardin, *Comedie Ital. en France*, 9, 12, 13. ³ Bernardin, *Com. Ital. en France*, 27.
* *Ibid.*, 42.

² *Ibid.*, 52. ⁵ *Ibid.*, 90.
⁶ Gozzi's *Memoirs* (Symond's trans).